

FIELD NATURALISTS' CLUB OF BALLARAT EXCURSION / NEWS SHEET

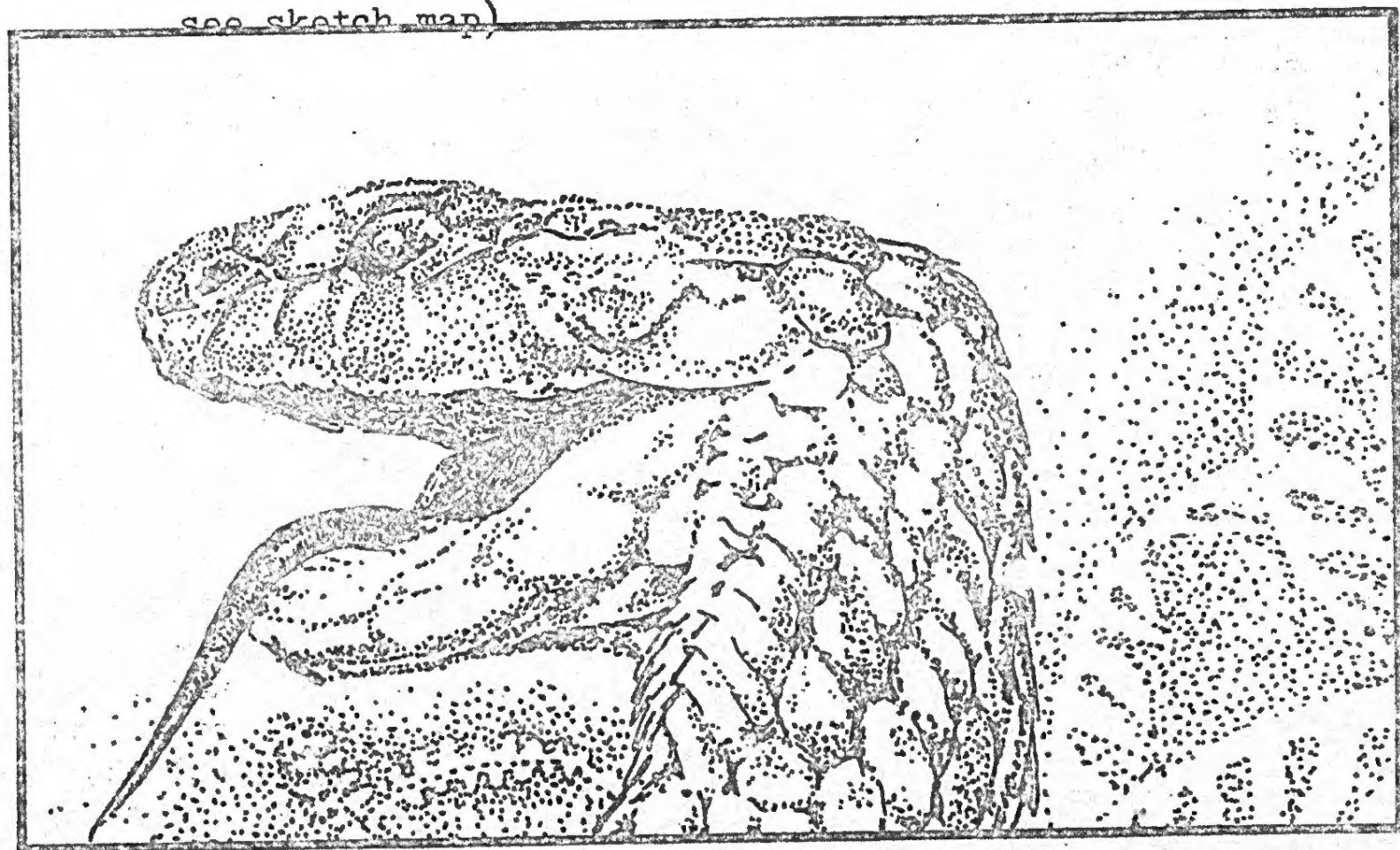
NOVEMBER 1979

Meeting 2nd NOVEMBER: Mr. P. Robertson - "Distribution and Habitats of Reptiles from the Ballarat Area"

Meeting 7th DECEMBER: Mr. & Mrs. R. Keller - "The Little Desert in Focus."

Excursion 4th NOVEMBER: Ben Major - L. Millar & I. Tiley: 9.30 a.m. from Crockers. 10.15 a.m. at Beaufort Rotunda.

Excursion SATURDAY 24th November: Lerderderg - Blackwood: 9.30 a.m. from the Steam Engine by Civic Hall Car Park in Armstrong St. 1.30 p.m. Nolans Creek Picnic Area (For directions, see sketch map)



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Meetings, as specified, are held in the Administration Building of the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street South, Ballarat, commencing 8 pm.

EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, Cnr. STURT and ARMSTRONG STREETS BALLARAT, AT 9.30 am FOR FULL DAY OUTING OR AT 1.30 pm FOR HALF DAY.

EXCURSION: 9th DECEMBER. Mt. Doran - Lal Lal. Leader M. Rotheram.
9.30 a.m. from Crockers.

MAJOR MITCHELL PLATEAU CAMP-OUT: Nov. 10 - 11th. Providing there are enough participants. Details from Secretary.

"LEISURETIME 79" Saturday 3rd November, Sunday 4th November at the Drill Hall, Curtis Street, Ballarat.

C.C.V. (Melbourne) monthly meeting to be held at Daylesford Friday 9th November. Hosts - "Save our Bushland Group." All or some of our members are invited to attend.

AN INVITATION has been issued for our members to attend the meeting of Maryborough Field Naturalists' Club on Monday 5th November at 8 p.m. To be held in the High School Hall. Speaker Dr. Jim Willis - Subject "In the Steps of Von Mueller."

AQUATIC INSECTS:

Dr. A. Neboiss, an Entymologist who works at the Natural History Museum, Melbourne spoke to the Club on Friday 5th Oct.

He outlined the way in which these insects have adapted to their environment but stressed that they are creatures that are greatly affected by human activity through the pollution of waterways. Never-the-less these insects are a good indicator for levels or types of pollution and level of salinity.

In the discussion concerning adaptation to the environment, Dr. Neboiss developed the theories about the evolution of aquatic insects: did they evolve as fresh water insects or as terrestrial insects which adapted to fresh water habits?

A further point made was not so much the concern of how the species got to a certain stage but how that species was able to survive. Added to this is the fact that within the aquatic insect species there are differences in the number of stages in the metamorphic cycle - some have 3 stages, some have only 2; and depending on the species and conditions there are often 2 hatchings, so that generations overlap.

A remarkable factor is that there appears to be little recognizable change in the form of some species - dragon flies for example, for over 200 million years.

There is a poor fossil record of aquatic insects. As rivers have been in existence for longer periods than standing water like lakes and ponds, most aquatic insects are found in rivers. Yet there is little sediment deposited in the fresh water habitat compared with marine situations.

The aquatic insects tissues decompose or disintegrate very quickly also. There are no survival techniques for these insects in standing water where the water is less oxygenated.

- The three main areas where aquatic insects are found are:
1. The fast water area where streams erode the banks and there is limited plant growth and no deposits of sediment.
 2. Slow moving areas of the river where there is soil deposited and more plant life.
 3. The open water zone.

Dr. Neboiss has conducted valuable field studies into the life cycles of a primitive form of stone fly - *thaumatoperla*. He has been instrumental in finding three forms of this species in three remote alpine areas of Victoria. This species has a life cycle of 2 to 3 years and has adapted to its environmental conditions in that its short visible period is from April to May and it can survive through the sub zero temperatures of winter.

A coloured movie film was shown of the habitats of this stone fly and the clear photos gave us a good description of these aquatic insects. Interested discussion followed.

Margaret Tonkin.

HALF DAY EXCURSION TO DEREEL: After a slight detour by one of the cars, we all met up with Lindsay Fink near some pines at Dereel. We very quickly noticed a number of pine cones which had probably been ripped open by birds to get at the seeds. We then moved into the bush and found a feast of nature. The variety of plants and animals was more than enough to cater for everyone's interests. We all went our various ways and were thoroughly absorbed for most of the afternoon.

There was a good variety of eucalypts including Yellow Box, Messmate and Red Stringybark. A rather stunted twisted eucalypt was surprisingly found to be a Manna Gum (*E. viminalis*).

Another surprise was a large tree of Golden Wattle (*A. pycnantha*). The ground cover was extremely varied, including wildflowers, prostrate wattle, droseras, mosses (some very large) and lichens. Equally varied and colourful was the abundant bird life.

The long time spent in the bush meant that we arrived at Dereel Lagoon rather late. The magnificent Manna Gums lining the lagoon contrasted strongly with the specimen located earlier. A white water bird was identified by our bird experts as a muscovy duck. A highlight here was an aerial display by some swamp harriers which were nesting in the lagoon. Also one of our more recent members showed some skill in throwing the boomerang.

We left rather late, thoroughly satisfied with the outing. Thanks go to Lindsay for organizing a most enjoyable afternoon.

DEREEL EXCURSION PLANT LIST: *Lissanthe strigosa*, Peach Heath; *Ulex europaeus*, Gorse; *Acacia mearnsii*, Black Wattle; *A. paradoxa*, Hedge Wattle; *A. aculeatissima*, Thin Leaf Wattle (Prostrate Wattle?); *A. pycnantha*, Golden Wattle; *Eucalyptus viminalis*, Manna Gum; *E. rubida*, Candlebark; *E. melliodora*, Yellow Box; *E. obliqua*, Messmate; *E. macrorhyncha*, Red Stringybark; *E. baxteri*, Brown Stringybark; *Leptospermum juniperinum*, Prickly tea-tree; *Dicella revoluta*, Black Anther Flax Lily; *Drosera whittakeri*, Scented Sundew; *D. auriculata*, Tall sundew; *D. planchonii*, Climbing Sundew; *Hypoxis glabella*, Yellow Star; *Anguillaria diorica*, Early Nancy; *Hardenbergia violacea*, Sarsparilla; *Leucopogon virgatus*, Bearded Heath; *Pterostylus nutans*, Nodding Green Hood Orchid; *Goodenia ovata*, Hop Goodenia; *Thysanotus patersonii*, Twining Fringe Lily; *Astralaria humifusum*, Cranberry Heath; *Hovea heterophylla*, Common Hovea.

BIRD LIST: Eastern hrike tit, yellow-rumped thornbill, jacky winter, eastern rosella, striated pardalote, crimson rosella, grey fantail, Australian magpie, masked (spurwing) plover, brown falcon, grey thrush, goldfinch, horsefield bronze cuckoo, black-faced cuckoo-shrike, white-naped honeyeater, swamp harrier, grey currawong, galah, tree martin, scarlet robin, white-throated treecreeper, little raven, blue wren, restless flycatcher, sitella, white-winged chough, flame robin, brown weebill.

Geoff Hocking.

WOADY YALOAK EXCURSION:

Fifteen brave souls defied the elements to attend the October excursion, led by Peter Fry and Frank Harrap. The Bird Paddock at Linton was our pre-lunch destination; we were met by Roger Thomas and taken on a guided tour. Roger informed us that the tree planting program which has been going on for some time, was starting to have a good effect on the bird population. One instance was the yellow-winged honeyeater, previously only a visitor to the block. It now appears to be a year round resident, it certainly seemed very much at home feeding in the numerous varieties of Grevillea, along with the eastern spinebills. We were shown four nests all in the one tree, a magpie lark, restless flycatcher and white-faced heron shared the upper storey.

In the root system on the creek bank a welcome swallow was in residence, a ringtailed possum's nest was pointed out quite close to the ground. The occupant must have had a tiring night, completely ignoring the noise being made by a group of naturalists hoping to catch a glimpse of a sleepy possum. A speckled warbler was observed feeding in company with a flock of thornbills.

About this time our thoughts were turning towards lunch, and it wasn't too long before the aroma of barbecued chops and sausages started to fill the air. After lunch we left the block in the capable hands of Roger.

At the Woady Yaloak Crossing we waited for the afternoon contingent, only three arrived to boost our numbers, but they brought much better weather with them, from memory not another shower until we were on our way home. After a short excursion along the creek, where the welcome swallows were putting on a fine aerobatic display, we moved up the hill into the ironbarks where we found various wildflowers and orchids. This area is dotted with mine shafts, some of them quite deep, but they do have their uses. Some misguided people use them for dumping rubbish, the pardalotes use them for their nesting burrows by tunneling into the side of the shaft.

A black wallaby created some excitement by almost blundering into our group, apparently it was disturbed lower down the hillside by one of our members.

Our next move was to the Devil's Kitchen, where we hoped

to catch a glimpse of the peregrine falcons. We remained in the area for a short time but they were not sighted.

As always all good things must come to an end, and our day out was no exception; in spite of a few showers we had a wonderful day. A total of thirty six birds were identified, some of which were tree martin, fairy martin, restless flycatcher, fantailed cuckoo, pallid cuckoo, eastern rosella, rufous whistler, golden whistler, white-eared honeyeater, white-naped honeyeater, yellow-winged honeyeater, striated and spotted pardalote, mistletoe bird and brown hawk.

Ken Hammond.

NELSON CAMP-OUT.

The Nelson Camp-out began with an Old Time Family Dance, on Friday evening. Some members danced, while others preferred to warm themselves by huddling around the open fire. The facilities at Karrkandi Hall were excellent. The hall was warm and spacious, the cooking facilities were adequate and dormitories were comfortable and had en-suite facilities.

The habitat around Nelson is of two or three types. The first is the coastal-estuary scrub of the Discovery Bay Coastal Park, with sand dunes and swamp lands supporting a wide variety of scrubby growth, and coastal heathland plants.

The Glenelg River, running 1 m above normal, carried Western Victorian silt to the ocean. Many red capped dotterels foraged along the coastal sands in the biting wind and rains, or took shelter behind small mats of seaweed. A ruddy turnstone from the Arctic was sighted. A plover sat on eggs, high atop a mound of clay just beside the entrance road to the beach. Other species sighted at Glenelg River mouth were hooded dotterel, curlew sandpiper, pied oystercatcher, white-fronted chat, and red-necked stint.

On Saturday afternoon a crowded boat took us along the Glenelg River, the second habitat, to the Princess Margaret Rose Caves. The weather had improved slightly and an enjoyable trip was had by all.

On Sunday some of us returned to the Ocean Beach while

others studied the third habitat, the Lower Glenelg National Park. Masses of orchids were in flower, including Redbeaks (*Lyperanthus nigrieans*), Hare Orchid (*Caladenia menziesii*) and Common Spider Orchid (*Caladenia patersonii*).

Grass Trees, *Xanthorea* were in bloom in previously burnt areas, with enormous 2 or 3 m tails sticking upward from small plants. Most of these were tall and straight but occasionally one could be seen which had tied itself in knots.

The Campout finished up with a barbeque lunch at Moleside Creek, followed by a short excursion to Jone's Lookout on a large cliff overlooking the Glenelg. The weather was sullen, the river muddy and murky, but on a fine clear day it would be a beautiful sight.

Our entertainment on Saturday evening was a beautiful presentation of slides of flora and fauna of the area, by the Portland Field Naturalists. Despite the weather, it was a pleasant and interesting weekend. Sixty bird species were recorded.

Rob Borch.

070-39999 COMES HOME

On September 29th, on a beach near Apollo Bay, I found a Crested Tern banded by the CSIRO Division of Wildlife Research. After forwarding the band to Canberra, I received information that the bird had been banded as a nestling on Little Waterhouse Island, Tasmania (410 km SW of Apollo Bay) by Mr. Jack Liddy on December 8, 1962 -- an elapsed time of 201 months, or nearly 17 years.

Records show that the longest elapsed time between banding and recovery for a crested tern is 20 years 3 months 5 days, held by a bird banded on January 13, 1958, and recovered on April 18, 1978. The crested tern appears to hold the record for longevity of Australian species banded under the scheme. with the Australian magpie next at nearly 20 years and the grey teal, 17 years.

It was most gratifying to see that though the bird I found had been wearing its band for nearly 17 years since it was a tiny

nestling, the band was still free on the leg and had left no mark or callous. After removing the band (with screwdriver and pliers!) we returned the carcase to the beach to continue its natural cycle.

The aim of the Australian Bird-Banding Scheme is to obtain accurate information about the habits and movements of birds. Such knowledge, apart from its purely scientific value, is essential for the effective conservation of native species, for the management of game birds, and for the control of those which are pests.

The Scheme began in 1953. Up to 1978, more than 1.5 million birds of 800 species had been banded and more than 130,000 recovered. About 80,000 birds are now being banded each year.

Margaret Rotheram.

MOSQUITO FLAT

Three further visits in July, September and October have added red backed kingfisher, pallid and fantailed cuckoos, gilbert whistler, mistletoe bird, brown quail and owlet nightjar to the previous bird list. The owlet nightjar was perched on a branch at 3.00 p.m. on a windy afternoon and the bird hung on even when I came within 8 metres range.

Another bird I should add which I had also seen only once before was a rufous song lark. Slater describes the voice as "a rich melodious song uttered in flight or on a perch" and it certainly was melodious as the bird either perched in a leafless bush or flew to a nearby tree.

Frank Harrap.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SYLLABUS ITEMS AND EXCURSION VENUES for 1980-81 are still needed. This is your opportunity to state where you would like to go, and if you prefer half or full day outings. Any names of potential speakers gratefully received.
